DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 225 950 SP 021 706

TITLE	School Staff Perceptions of Changes in "School Climate." December 1979-December 1980. Teacher Corps Program '79. The University of Toledo/Springfield Local Schools.
INSTITUTION	Toledo Univ., Ohio. Coll. of Education.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, D.C. Teacher Corps.
PUB DATE	Jan 81
NOTE	23p.; For related documents, see SP 021 705-717.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Change Strategies; Decision Making; Discipline; *Educational Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Needs Assessment; Parent School Relationship; *Staff Development; Stress Variables; Student Attitudes; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Morale; Teaching Conditions
IDENTIFIERS	Teacher Corps; University of Toledo Springfield Local Schools Pro

ABSTRACT

A report is given on perceived improvements in overall school climate resulting from staff development activities initiated in response to a needs assessment survey distributed in December 1979 to the staffs of three elementary schools, one junior high school, and two senior high schools in Springfield, Ohio. Information is given on: (1) priority needs identified for each school (student respect, parent support, better teacher administrator relationships, counselor involvement in discipline, community satisfaction and pride, positive student attitudes); (2) staff development goals and activities formulated to meet these needs; and (3) school staff development activities, conducted between March 1 and December 31, 1980, which were designed to improve areas most in need of change. The development of the needs assessment instrument used in the project, and subsequently refined for analysis at the conclusion of the year, is described. Tables present statistics on paired need indices for items in the new assessment instrument which matched the original instrument, and differences and percentages for pairs of identified school climate needs assessment indices. Greatest perceived improvements are listed for each school. A sample of the needs assessment survey is attached, as are selected comments from staff members on the most positive changes observed. (JD)

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ED225950

Teacher Corps * Program '79
The University of Toledo/
Springfield Local Schools

SCHOOL STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGES IN "SCHOOL CLIMATE," DECEMBER, 1979 - DECEMBER, 1980

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January, 1981

SP 014 706

Introduction

One of four basic outcomes for all Teacher Corps projects is an improved school climate. In addition, "school climate" is one of five subject areas for improvement through staff development by The University of Toledo/Springfield Local Schools Project. As explained in the 1980-81 Continuation Amendments to the Project's proposal (p. 88):

> As a basic outcome, improved school climate is a result of an improved set of normative relationships which provide the context for schools as a social system... All project programming for educational personnel will be focused on improving those relationships.
>
> In addition, some programming will be focused on selected school climate issues. As a particular program area, therefore, school climate refers to specific issues identified as a result of the needs assessment activities completed to date, e.g., school discipline, student and teacher attitudes, and the like.

The greatest "school climate" needs identified by the original building staff assessments (later corroborated by community and student assessments) were:

Crissey

1. Student respect for staff members;
2. More adequate work spaces;
3. Sound levels conducive to learning activities;
4. More adequate discipline in halls and on busses.

Dorr St.

1. Parent support for discipline;
2. More sufficient classroom equipment;
3. More adequate curriculum materials;
4. More adequate discipline, especially on busses.

Holland

1. More administrator compliments for deserving staff members;
2. Administrator "listening to" staff members;
3. Greater professional fulfillment;
4. More sufficient audio-visual equipment.

Junior High

1. More appropriate counselor's approaches to student needs;

Junior High (cont'd)

2. Counselor involvement in overall discipline pattern;
3. More adequate communication between School Board and staff;
4. More consistency in student discipline.

High School No 1*

1. Greater community satisfaction and pride;
2. More effective curriculum articulation and communication of student progress;
3. Greater staff satisfaction with administration of school policies;
4. Closer staff working relationships.

High School No. 2

1. More positive student attitudes;
2. Satisfying salaries;
3. Parent support for discipline;
4. Consistent discipline procedures among teachers.

A second basic outcome for Teacher Corps projects is an improved educational personnel development system. A major component of this project has been staff development, especially staff development designed to address particular "school climate' needs.

The purpose of this report is to present findings and conclusions of an initial study of changes in identified "school climate" needs attributable to Project programming to date.

Staff Development Goals and Activities

Goals and objectives for staff development programming to address "school climate" needs were formulated by a representative school-community-university committee following review of findings of the school staff, community and student needs assessments previously conducted. Those goals and objectives, which subsequently were prioritized for the school staff development program, address needs of several kinds (1980-81 Continuation

*Two assessments were carried out at the High School originally.

Amendments, pp. 99-103):

1. Student respect;
2. School discipline policies and procedures;
3. Communications;
4. Home-school relations;
5. Role responsibilities;
6. Teacher attitudes;
7. School staff morale;
8. Environmental aesthetics;
9. Decision-making;
10. Group processes.

A number of project-supported school staff development activities were conducted between March 1 and December 31, 1980. Those activities were based upon identified staff development goals and objectives, and they utilized project needs assessment findings in their planning and implementation. The activities included: (1) "Spring Festival" mini-sessions concerning "Motivation and Discipline," "Assertive Discipline," "Feeling Good about Being a Kid," and "A Project TEACH Activity;" (2) fall building workshops entitled "Motivation in Reading" (Holland Elementary), "School Discipline" (Springfield Junior High School); and (3) a teacher institute, "School Climate and Teacher Stress," which provided summer training and fall implementation activities.

"Spring Festival" sessions involved both teachers and community residents in after-school presentations. The fall building workshops involved 75-100% of the respective building staffs in released-time and after-school sessions. The institute involved 55 teachers and five administrators in two week's summer training/planning and five fall follow-up sessions. Both summer and fall institute activities focused on: (1) teacher stress, (2) building climate, (3) classroom affect and (4) "disruptive students."* In addition, other staff development activities to date have addressed "school climate" needs, at

*For more complete descriptions of these and other project staff development activities, see "An Initial Assessment of Year Two Activities," January, 1981; "An Assessment of Teacher Corps Intervention Activities at Holland Elementary School," February, 1981; and "Final Report of the Ohio Teacher Institute, 'School Climate and Teacher Stress,' March, 1981, all reports of collaborative efforts of Springfield Local Schools and The University of Toledo.

least indirectly. A two-day district wide "school climate" activity included a major presentation by a nationally-known consultant and progress reports from each of the district's schools as well as the consultant's visits to the respective schools and discussions with teachers and administrators. Finally, no other staff development activities addressing "school climate" needs occurred in the school district during the identified period.

The Study

The study first turned attention to the original (December, 1979) school staff assessments of "school climate" needs identified by professional staffs in the respective buildings. From each of the six original assessment instruments, items which corresponded to the greatest needs reported above were identified. Items corresponding to needs which were not addressed through staff development were eliminated.* The remaining items then were included, as originally stated by the respective school assessment task forces for the most part, in a new "school climate" instrument (see Attachment A). In addition, items were added from the original instruments, where necessary, so that at least four items from each original instrument had been incorporated into the new instrument. In fact, because of item overlap among the original instruments, more than four for each building were incorporated.

The new instrument contained twenty items with Likert-type scales for responses to perceived importance and perceived occurrence. Two of the items solicited multiple responses. A twenty-first item solicited open-ended comments about most positive "school climate" changes.

The number of need indices from the original instruments which could be matched with indices constructed from the new instrument varied from building

*Those needs previously had been communicated directly to the Superintendent.

to building as follows:

Original Building Instrument	N Matched Need Indices
Crissey	9
Dorr St.	8
Holland	7
Junior High	9
High School No. 1 / High School No. 2	6

The new assessment instrument was distributed to all professional staff in the school district (N=184). Forty-one percent of the instruments (N=76) were completed and returned for analysis.

Returns were subjected to analyses by school. For each school, averages were calculated for each response set (perceived importance and actual occurrence) and need indices constructed. For those items which matched previously identified items from the original instruments, the original and new need indices were paired. Table 1 displays the paired indices.

Then, for each pair, differences and corresponding percentages of difference were calculated. Finally, differences and percentages were averaged, both for all items utilized and for items corresponding to greatest needs originally identified. Table 2 displays differences and percentages for the paired indices as well as the averages.

Findings and Conclusions

Examination of the statistics displayed in Tables 1 and 2 reveals the following findings:

A. All but three of the differences are positive and indicate that, overall, staff perceptions of needs denote improvement.

B. The percentage of overall improvement ranges from 11.4% (Dorr St.) to 45.2% (Crissey).

C. All of the differences for originally identified greatest needs are positive, i.e., improvements are perceived in all priority areas.

D. The percentage of improvement in priority areas ranges from 2?.4. (Dorr

TABLE 1. PAIRED NEED INDICES FOR ITEMS IN THE NEW "SCHOOL CLIMATE" ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT WHICH WERE MATCHED WITH ITEMS IN THE ORIGINAL INSTRUMENTS.

	Crissey[a]		Dorr St.		Holland		Jr. High		H.S. #1		H.S. #2	
	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Item	N=10	N=08	N=13	N=14	N=25	N=20	N=20	N=15	N=41	N=14	N=32	N=14
1. Activities are available at Springfield that make it possible for students to set realistic expectations for themselves.							1.85[b]	0.92				
2. I feel Springfield students have a good attitude toward their schools.	1.74	0.88	0.67	1.57							1.64[b]	0.61
3. Students demonstrate respect for staff members.	2.78[b]	1.00	1.38	1.00								
4. Given students' unique needs, counselors' approaches to students are appropriate.							1.57[b]	1.09				
5. Noise level is appropriate to ongoing activities												
A. in the classroom.	1.19	0.42	1.64	0.93								
B. in other parts of the building.	1.75[b]	1.28	1.49	0.94								
6. The discipline is adequate												
A. in the classroom.	1.20	0.87	1.34	0.93								
B. in other parts of the building.	1.75[b]	1.25	1.74[b]	1.28								
C. outside the building.	1.80[b]	0.88	1.79[b]	1.59								

[a]For each school, 1=original index; 2=new index.
[b]Greatest needs identified in the original assessments.

Item	Grissey 1	Grissey 2	Dorm St. 1	Dorm St. 2	Holland 1	Holland 2	Jr. High 1	Jr. High 2	H.S. #1 1	H.S. #1 2	H.S. #2 1	H.S. #2 2
7. Discipline is consistently enforced by administration.					1.70	1.07					1.62[b]	0.93
8. Uniform discipline procedures facilitate the learning process.							1.44	0.55				
9. Teachers feel other policies are uniformly administered.									1.35[b]	0.79		
10. My school has a communication network to help keep parents and community members informed.	0.52	0.12					0.45	0.33				
11. A communication system provides direct contact between the school and parents regarding a student with problems.			1.60[b]	0.79			0.55	0.42				
12. There is community pride in feeling that their educational needs are being met.									1.61[b]	0.76		
13. Teachers feel they are "listened to" when they express their concerns and interests to building administrators.	1.36	1.08			2.03[b]	1.33	0.35	0.60	0.39	1.17		
14. Differences between administrators and staff are settled privately.					1.92	1.04						
15. Staff members are complimented when deserving.					2.05[b]	1.36						

Item	Crissey 1	Crissey 2	Dorr St. 1	Dorr St. 2	Holland 1	Holland 2	Jr. High 1	Jr. High 2	H.S. #1 1	H.S. #1 2	H.S. #2 1	H.S. #2 2
16. The building administrators have created a climate that encourages innovation on the part of teachers.					1.74	1.57	1.00	0.75				
17. Classroom and teaching assignments are secure.					1.94[b]	1.13						
18. Teachers and other school employees find professional fulfillment in their positions.					1.99[b]	1.16	1.37	0.96				
19. The faculty has a close working relationship.									1.28[b]	0.91		
20. Adequate communication takes place between the school board and teachers concerning problems.							1.45[b]	1.16				

TABLE 2. DIFFERENCES (D) AND PERCENTAGES (%) FOR PAIRS OF IDENTIFIED "SCHOOL CLIMATE" NEEDS ASSESSMENT INDICES.

	Crissey		Dorr St.		Holland		Jr. High		H.S. #2		H.S. #2	
Pair[a]	D	%	D	%	D	%	D	%	D	%	D	%
1st ✓	0.86	49.4	-0.90	-134.0	0.63	37.1	0.93[b]	50.3	0.56[b]	41.5	1.03[b]	62.8
2nd ✓	1.78[b]	64.0	0.38	27.5	0.70[b]	34.5	0.48[b]	30.6	0.85[b]	52.8	0.69[b]	42.6
3rd ✓	0.77	64.7	0.71	43.3	0.88	45.8	0.89	61.8	-0.78	-200.0		
4th ✓	0.47[b]	26.9	0.55	36.9	0.69[b]	33.7	0.12	26.7	0.37[b]	28.9		
5th ✓	0.33	27.9	0.39	29.1	0.17	9.8	0.13	23.6				
6th ✓	0.50[b]	28.6	0.46[b]	26.4	0.81[b]	41.8	-0.25	-71.4				
7th ✓	0.92[b]	51.1	0.20[b]	11.2	0.83[b]	41.7	0.25	25.0				
8th ✓	0.40	76.9	0.81[b]	50.6			0.41	29.9				
9th ✓	0.24	17.6					0.29[b]	20.0				
T Total	0.70	45.2	0.33	11.4	0.67	34.9	0.36	21.8			0.45	4.8
T Priorities	0.92	42.7	0.49	29.4	0.76	37.9	0.71	40.5			0.70	45.7

[a]Items corresponding to the indice pairs are displayed in Table 1.

[b]Differences for greatest identified needs in the original assessments.

St.) to 45.7% (High School).

E. Greatest perceived improvements in "school climate" (absolute difference greater than 0.75 and percentage change greater than 50.0) for the respective schools are (Attachment B details respondents' comments):

Crissey

1. Student respect;
2. Discipline outside building;
3. Student attitude;
4. Noise level in the classroom.

Dorr St.

Home-school communication.

Holland

1. Settling of staff-administrator differences;
2. Sense of professional fulfillment;
3. Sense of security in assignments.

Junior High

1. Availability of activities for students' setting realistic expectations;
2. Uniformity of discipline.

High School

1. Perception of community pride;
2. Student attitude.

F. Perceived changes in "school climate" needs were negative in two areas:

1. Teachers' perception of being "listened to" by administrator (High School and, to a lesser extent, Junior High);
2. Student attitude (Dorr St.).

At least three considerations should be kept in mind in formulating conclusions from these findings:

1. Less than half the building staff members completed and returned the new assessment instruments. About sixty percent completed and returned the original instruments. However, except for the High School, the numbers participating in the study were about the same as before.

2. "Statistical significance" of calculated differences (probability that perceived changes are real) has not yet been determined. (It is planned that such determination can be made as a part of a second needs assessment follow-up at the end of the current project year.) However, it is not now inappropriate to conclude that at least the

greatest perceived improvement reflect real effects of Project staff development programming.

3. Changes in school need are relative to originally identified perceptions. Therefore, it is appropriate to make comparisons from the first assessment to the second. It is inappropriate to make comparisons among schools.

Three final conclusions can be drawn from this study.

First, perceived improvements in "school climate" needs can be attributed to staff development activities designed and implemented by teachers and other professional staff through the Teacher Corps Project and through other collaborative efforts of Springfield Local Schools and The University of Toledo.

Secondly, the nature of those activities is important to their effectiveness. More particularly, it should be noted that the staff development activities shared the following characteristics:

1. Specific needs, goals and objectives identified by school personnel;
2. Activities designed collaboratively by school and university;
3. Activities and consequent implementation which were site-specific;
4. "Total" school involvements as evidenced by school-wide and district-wide activities, building-wide participation (critical mass of teachers and administrator), use of released time, and the like;
5. In short, a "seeding of the school grapevine" which directs and facilitates day-to-day interactions of students, teachers, administrators, community members and others which constitutes the school climate in its fuller sense.

Finally, it can be concluded that staff development activities addressing "school climate" and other identified areas of school need should be ongoing. Activities designed both to address residual needs and to reinforce initial improvements are essential not only for further improvement but also for maintaining initial improvement. To recall the two Teacher Corps basic outcomes discussed at the outset of this report, provisions for a school staff development system as well as for school climate improvement are important. And, to address a third Teacher Corps basic outcome, steps must be taken by Springfield local School to institutionalize both products and practices for improvement.

ATTACHMENT A

SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY
Fall, 1980

! ! IMPORTANT - READ FIRST ! !

In the past calendar year, a number of activities have been developed and implemented to enhance "school climate" at Springfield. Additional activities will be undertaken during the life of the Teacher Corps project. Periodically, the impact of those activities will be documented and assessed, and teacher input for assessment is essential.

The following items were selected from the "school climate" instruments developed and administered by the respective building task forces during the Teacher Corps needs assessment in the last school year. Included in the selection are items which resulted in identification of the greatest building needs. Items are incorporated here in their original teacher language.

Please identify your current building assignment below. Then, for each of the items which follow, please indicate both: (1) how important you think it is for your school and (2) how often you think it currently true of your school by circling the appropriate numerals according to the scales which follow. In addition, please respond briefly to the final item.

School:
___ Crissey
___ Dorr
___ Holland
___ Springfield Jr. High
___ Springfield High School

Scales: How Important?
4 = Essential
3 = Very Important
2 = Somewhat Important
1 = Unimportant

How Often True?
Always
Most of the time
Sometimes
Never

		How Important?				How Often True?			
1.	Activities are available at Springfield that make it possible for students to set realistic expectations for themselves.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
2.	I feel Springfield students have a good attitude toward their schools.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
3.	Students demonstrate respect for staff members.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
4.	Given students' unique needs, counselors' approaches to students are appropriate.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
5.	Noise level is appropriate to ongoing activities								
	A. in the classroom.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
	B. in other parts of the building.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

	Very Important				Has Little Use			
6. The discipline is adequate								
A. in the classroom.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
B. in other parts of the building.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
C. outside the building.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
7. Discipline is consistently enforced by administration.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
8. Uniform discipline procedures facilitate the learning process.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
9. Teachers feel other policies are uniformly administered.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
10. My school has a communication network to help keep parents and community members informed.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
11. A communication system provides direct contact between the school and parents regarding a student with problems.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
12. There is community pride in feeling that their educational needs are being met.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
13. Teachers feel they are "listened to" when they express their concerns and interests to building administrators.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
14. Differences between administrators and staff are settled privately.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
15. Staff members are complimented when deserving.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
16. The building administrators have created a climate that encourages innovation on the part of teachers.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
17. Classroom and teaching assignments are secure.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
18. Teachers and other school employees find professional fulfillment in their positions.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
19. The faculty has a close working relationship.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

		Poor Experience				Excellent Experience			
20.	Adequate communication takes place between the school board and teachers concerning problems.	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

21. Identify the most positive changes in "school climate" which have occurred in your building this fall:

SCHOOL STAFF COMMENTS ABOUT MOST POSITIVE CHANGES IN "SCHOOL CLIMATE"

Grissey Elementary

Better behavior due to the addition of the penalty room. Very few students have to be sent to it instead of going out for recess.

Faculty has a closer working relationship to solving school problems.

Children have more pride in their behavior in the school building and on playground. More anxious to please. More uniformity on rules and certain classroom tasks. Administrator is "somewhat" more supportive. More communication between parents this year.

The overall discipline, through the use of a "penalty room" and reward movies, has improved.

Some improvement in enforcing some school rules through use of penalty room as enforcement. Those who are not sent to penalty room for breaking rules are rewarded. Some attention has been given to try to establish better school spirit (school store, musical programs, horor roll).

Reward system for the deserving children. Positive reinforcement for the "good" instead of just negative reinforcement for the "bad."

An increasing awareness of communication problems between staff and community.

Good behavior is being rewarded.

Dorr St. Elementary

Sharing by staff to staff, parents, and administration! More of a sense of togetherness (teachers).

Great communication. An easy but firm atmosphere.

I'm sorry to say I can't see any change.

Desks for 3 of the complex areas.

Student Council (only one I can think of).

Student Council.

Enhance community pride in school. Enhance children pride in school.

Holland Elementary

VIP bulletin board promotes personal interactions among faculty and shares such with students. Honors goodies box. Secret Pal system. Staff festivities/functions (not necessarily in that order).

More cohesiveness. The staff seems to be getting closer and closer together, trying/giving positive things as much as possible. The "I Care" attitude seems much stronger.

Communication.

The staff has given each other "pats on back" when they are due. We look at each other as individuals, but at the same time a group that works together.

Uniform silent reading program more staff interaction, both socially and professionally. Principal is more receptive, and is making more personal contact with teachers.

It is felt administrator and teachers have developed a closer working relationship, however only through administrators and teachers efforts.

Staff cohesiveness.

The silent reading time is getting great comments from my parents. The VIP board, put up by Bonnie Spiess, is definetly letting the kids see another side of all of the staff. I'm enjoying our "Secret Pal" idea -- oh, so many things I can't say-- in case the wrong person is around.

Getting to know other teachers as individuals so that working together is more fun and productive.

More materials (books) through interns introduced to classroom through Miss Judd.

The staff "cares!" Secret Pal, Social Fund, Birthday Pals.

Some teachers changed grade levels. Somewhat active social committee. Staff parties initiated by social committee.

Discipline. Teachers more willing to work together.

Better overall discipline.

Good school spirit and unity.

School spirit and interest is improving this but mostly on teachers part. Mr. Chaffee has a great deal of difficulty expressing his feelings. It is often hard to know how to take him since he does not make his feelings clear and consistent in an appropriate way. This is said by one who has a pretty good rapport with him so those who don't must feel even more ambiguous.

I don't know if it has been a change -- but we have fun together -- teach together -- work together -- this has been continuing.

Springfield Jr. High

Building painted. Teachers taking more pride in decorating rooms. More school spirit and pride.

Staff Cohesiveness.

Attitude for the betterment of all greater closeness of employees.

None - we have always been pretty positive.

Better rapport between teachers.

It has not changed but the on-going attitude of the staff to work together -- teach together -- solve problems together -- have fun together. This area has improved.

I feel that the staff has grown a great deal closer - there is much more of a unified feeling in the building.

A more positive atmosphere. Less griping.

Springfield High School

Secret Pal. Seven period day.

I think the activities developed as a direct result of the stress institute have helped staff morale a lot.

The physical changes, such as painting.

Teachers are closer, communicating, sharing common concerns.

There seems to be a little more staff cohesiveness. A more positive attitude among the staff.

There seems to be a closer relationship between faculty and administration and faculty themselves.

I think there has been closer teacher interaction (both formal and informal).

More uniform discipline. A closer working relationship between staff. A closer social relationship between staff.

Individual staff members seem more positive.

Nothing has changed - although that is not necessarily bad.

Unidentified School

ISS - remission of day for good behavior.

The building looks so much better since its been painted.

Painting of lockers and rooms PRIDE.

Better communication among teachers. Many activities planned to get the teachers and staff together informally.

More staff co-operation. More unity on staff.